2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

LAND AND HOUSES IN HUNZA

As you enter, you turn your eyes left and with your free right hand salute the master of the house and wish him peace. You will find him seated on a spacious dais raised well above the earthen floor and comfortably carpeted with goats' hair rugs of his own weaving, or it may be with felt carpets from Kashgar. The left-hand wall of the dark passage through which you have entered screens the end of this recessed dais, and is lined with a capacious cupboard reaching to the ceiling. At the head of the dais is a gigantic wooden bin, divided into chambers each with its separate lid, in which the various kinds of flour are stored as they are ground for use: barley, wheat, millets, and buckwheats. The dais itself is 6 or 7 feet wide and 10 or 12 feet long, the men's sitting place by day and the major sleeping bench by night. Each person has his own set of bedding—padded quilts or homespun blankets—in which he rolls himself like a sausage. The sleepers lie crosswise on the bench, which is wide enough to let them stretch full length, and when neatly packed for the night eight or ten can be comfortably accommodated. On the opposite side of the room is the minor bench, equally roomy, but an inch or two less raised, which is the women's sitting place by day, and at night the sleeping bench for women and children. It also has a built-up cupboard at the foot, and at the head, corresponding to the large flour bin, the housewife's spacious "yeast-cupboard" in which she keeps her kneading trough and rolling-pin, her cooking-pots and what not. Its door is at her left hand as she sits on her cross-bench, and the top of it serves as general shelf, table, and "dresser." A more admirable scheme of architecture, better suited to the family's needs, would be difficult to devise. The complete absence of windows gives a sense of security and cosiness; the complete absence of senseless "furniture" gives a delightful feeling of space and peace and leisure, and makes you want to go home and make a bonfire of your tables and chairs. How much more we have lost than gained by learning to sit on chairs and losing the pliability of joint that makes squatting natural. How much unnecessary domestic slavery goes to our "housework." Every morning the Hunza women take the family rugs and bedding

342 [576] 352 352 513 352 342 352 356

and hang them in sun and air. Five minutes with a broom and the whole house is effectively cleaned!

The hospitality and goodwill of these people is beyond belief. We had never met or heard of the proud owner of this new house, yet he had spread his benches with rugs and carpets for us, had raised some glass bottles (incredibly precious things these) and filled them with flowers to do us honour. So we sat in comfort and asked innumerable questions, supplementing all we had learned from Kalbi's house and proudly showing off how much we knew. Qudrat Ullah and I worked the measuring tape and sang out various dimensions which David entered on the rough plan he had sketched. And as we worked we chatted about all sorts of things, and found our host most interesting, as indeed all people are who are close in touch with real life—the bore is a pernicious product of 'civilization. Before we went away they brought two huge dishes of peaches and lovely grapes and bunches of flowers for us to take home. We said all the nice things we could think of and wished the family happiness and long life in the new house and plenty of children to fill it, though to judge by the dozens of merry little faces crowding in the background and peering round the entrance, there was no shortage of these in the neighbourhood. The Hunza children (as I have said more than once) are delightful: bright-eyed and eager, yet perfectly mannered. They never interrupt, they never bother you, they disappear like magic if bidden to go, but they love to see and hear all that is going on. While the men were purposefully, gravely talking, I would keep one half my mind at leisure, smile and nod across at the womenfolk, wordlessly implying: "Yes, we know what men are, don't we, you and I?" I would wag a finger in greeting to one or another of the small boys and girls, and then find another catching my eye and demanding an equal attention; I would tickle an adjacent toddler, who responded with a judiciously muffled squeal, and the whole group of households were our friends.

When finally we said good-bye, we could not insult our host by offering money in return for his kindness and the fruit. So next day I plundered my store-room and took out a small

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 41

Cleanliness

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS I have read and heard reports that the Hunzan homes are scrupulously clean. To that I will not subscribe. I just can't go along with any such assertion. 356 114

I peeked into, looked over at and viewed hundreds of the homes in Nagir on the trek and I also had a chance to see into many of the homes in Hunza and there isn't any question about it—the Hunzan homes are cleaner, tidier and have fewer odors (or none at all) than the others of this same area. But to say that they are scrupulously clean or that you could eat off the floor is, to my mode of thought, a gross exaggeration.

Obviously, the places the other writers saw were very clean and tidy. But, to me anyway, it is clear that the owners were notified in advance that they would have visitors.

Being curious and nosy by habit and turn of mind, I 356 123

managed to peer into a few of the places and noticed that they weren't as spic and span as some people say they are. In fact, we were taken through one home on a tour. We visited their downstairs apartment and then climbed the ladder to visit the upstairs one. I will admit and am in complete agreement with the other writers, that the place was scrupulously clean, swept and neat.

But—and this is important, so follow me—I had stuck my head and eyes into that selfsame home the day before, probably unknown to my guide, and had seen the condition that this same house was in then. While it was not filthy, nor could I even say dirty, it certainly was not in the same immaculate condition that it was in now, since this time the people were advised that we were coming.

So let it be said and accepted that the Hunzans are much cleaner than the Nagirwals and are generally, by and large, a clean, wholesome people, both in body and in home.

I have long ago accepted the clear-cut situation that hygiene and cleanliness are strictly matters of habit, custom and necessity and these factors vary from country to country. For example, the standard of cleanliness in Switzerland is quite different to that of neighboring France. And in Italy, especially in the southern part, it bears no resemblance to that practiced in either France or Switzerland. Then in England the standard changes again and when you get to America, well, there again it is so different that one would believe it was a different world.

Undoubtedly, the people of Hunza in their hygienic habits are far above those of India or Pakistan. I am here referring to the mass level, of course. Then, too, the Hunzan habits were far better than those in Italy.

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

The house of the average Hunzan farmer was not quite as good as the average European house. In my opinion, Hunzan cleanliness is as good as is desirable when all matters are considered. 356

Cleanliness as we know it in the West is neither desirable nor is it a necessity in a country like Hunza. To begin with, they have more important duties to perform than doing a lot of unnecessary housekeeping. Usually in the West, the man earns the wherewithal to sustain the home and the woman looks after the cooking, housekeeping and the rearing of the children. In Hunza the father, the mother and the children, as soon as they are old enough to know what to do, take part in the work. You see, it is practically a full time job for the entire family during the spring and summer to procure sufficient food to last throughout the year. 356 462

Therefore it is neither desirable nor necessary for a Hunzan wife to have a lot of furniture and other things that would require work and attention in her home.

If you are trying to compare the cleanliness of the average American city or town person's home with that of the Hunzan homes, then you are miles and miles away from reality, because very, very few people of the world—especially those in the more or less underprivileged countries or in remote districts—live in homes that are in any way comparable to the average city home in America. 356

In the locality where I live, the Niagara District, the choicest locations along the lake front are selected for subdivision sites and beautiful spacious homes with fine grounds are created. That may be all well and good in America, where rich arable land is readily available, but in Hunza, remember, every bit of land that they own and use for growing their life-giving crops has to be torn from the rocks of the mountain- 361

361 sides. Few, if any, Hunza homes are ever built where the land can be tilled. Usually the site that is selected for a home is part of a rocky promontory or some other location where the land could not be used for crops. They just can't afford to use a piece of tillable soil for a homesite.

342 The houses or homes are usually built of stones or rocks. No cement or any other binding compound is used. Yet the homes seem sturdy enough to stand most anything. I also saw some that were built of clay.

342 231 The lower floor of the Hunzan house is usually divided into two sections. One section has either no roof over it or just a part roof or covering and there is an opening in the wall, but no door. This is where the animals are kept. The Hunzan pasture and forage supply doesn't allow for the larger beasts. The cattle of Hunza are the diminutive kind, bred and selected for their dwarfishness, so that they will require less feeding, but still yield an abundant udderful of rich milk. This applies to goats, sheep and cows. The partial covering over the courtyard is so that the animals will have some form of protection overhead.

342 Then beside this is the house proper, probably half again as large . . . maybe 12 or 14 feet square.

The Hunzan farmer steps from his home into the stable, so to speak. This, of course, would horrify the people of America but it is not to be regarded as a sort of calamity, as utter degradation, or as a matter of filth and ill health, because this system is practiced in most other parts of the world even at the present time.

231 745 The Hunzans, being Mohammedans, do not raise pigs. Therefore they don't have the conditions that pigs would create.

356 I'm sure that I visited many of these courtyards and

I don't think I was struck by any unpleasant or bad odors. No doubt you would assume that being a farmer, the excrement of animals wouldn't offend me and in saying that you'd be very, very right, but even with a city man's view, I don't think you would have found the Hunzan barnyards smelly or dirty. 356

The roof of the living quarters is just high enough so that a tall man can stand up in it without bumping his head. The Hunzan roofs usually have heavy timbers strung across—at least 3 inches thick and placed about 12 inches apart. They have to be that thick and heavy because on top of this is laid earth. Practically every home has an earthen roof. The floor, too, is of hard earth that has been pounded through years of use, until it is a good sound firm floor that can be readily swept and kept clean. 342

Apart from the Mir's palace, every other home that I visited in Hunza and in Nagir had earthen floors. Now naturally one wouldn't expect an earthen floor to be spic and span or shine and glisten the way a good hardwood floor can be made to shine and glisten. These earthen or clay floors can be made smooth and even be polished, and it is actually done.

Often the room is divided off to allow for a storage room, where the dried apricot stones and other fruits and vegetables are kept for winter use. [251]

In the center of the room a hole is dug and often stones are laid at the bottom. Here the fire is laid and this is how they keep warm during the winter and where they do their cooking. Above is a hole about 18 inches square to allow the smoke to escape. The people sleep on the floor within warming distance of the fire. Beds in the average Hunzan homes are unknown, but they have bed rolls or other cloth contraptions to make the floor softer. Some of the wealthier or well-to-do [354] 513 352 352